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FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD, EUR/RPM AND EUR/ERA
OSD FOR WINTERNITZ

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - FEBRUARY 13, 2008

11. (U) ODC COORDINATES CROATIA'S 11TH ROTATION TO AFGHANISTAN: On February 12, the 11th contingent of Croatian soldiers departed for Afghanistan. These soldiers will replace Croatian soldiers returning home after a 6 month rotation in Afghanistan. The Office of Defense Cooperation coordinates these regular rotations to the ISAF mission. Currently, Croatia has 207 men deployed in ISAF and will increase the contingent to 300 this year in accordance with a parliamentary decision. Speaking about this most recent contingent, Croatian Defense Minister Branko Vukelic said that such missions promote Croatia and its readiness to join NATO. (PMcCabe)

12. (U) SUPPORT FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP OVER 50 PERCENT IN ALL POLLS: Recent polling results among all major pollsters in Croatia show more than half of Croatians support Croatia's NATO membership. The leading polling agency "Puls," whose work until recently had shown support in the upper 40s, this week found 51.5 percent of respondents in favor of Croatia accepting a NATO invitation. Thirty-two percent opposed Croatia's entry into NATO, while 16.5 percent said they didn't know. The "Promocija Plus" polling agency posted similar results in a survey conducted between January 31 and February 1, with 51.1 percent saying they favored Croatia's NATO membership, 39 percent opposed, and 9.9 percent undecided. In polling on January 28 and 29 by the "Vectura" agency, 54.1 percent of respondents said they would vote for NATO membership while 30.3 percent said they would vote against and 15.6 percent were undecided. A government-sponsored poll conducted by "GfK" agency scheduled released on February 8 shows 52 percent of Croatians in favor of NATO membership with 27 percent against and 21 percent undecided. (TSelinger)

13. (U) NEW NATIONAL BANK CIRCULAR ON MONEY LAUNDERING AND TERRORIST FINANCING: The Croatian National Bank issued a circular on February 11 to banks and other financial institutions laying out new measures in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing. The circular sets new guidelines for customer identification, risk assessment and reporting of suspicious transactions, among others. This step was taken in anticipation of upcoming legislative action to align Croatia's domestic law with the EU acquis, in this case, the Third Money Laundering Directive of 2005. (NBerliner)

14. (U) EMBASSY ZAGREB HOSTS FIRST AMERICAN CITIZEN'S INFORMATION NIGHT: On February 7, the Consular Section held the first American Citizen's Information Night at the Embassy, attended by more than 200 American citizens resident in Croatia. The AmCits had the opportunity to get information on topics such as overseas voting assistance, immigration to the U.S., Social Security issues, commercial

and investment opportunities, information about educational opportunities and English-speaking community groups in Croatia, as well as the latest information on requirements for Croatian visa and residence permits. Participants included USG officials from the Citizenship and Immigration Service and the Department of Homeland Security; Croatian officials from the Foreign Ministry's Visa and Aliens Department and the Interior Ministry's Aliens Department; and representatives of the American Chamber of Commerce, American International School of Zagreb, International Women's Club and Croatian-American Society. Embassy employees representing a number of offices were also available to answer questions about their programs and activities. Consular staff provided routine consular services, such as voting assistance, notarial services and passport renewals. More than 20 Foreign Service Officers and Locally Engaged Staff from U.S. Embassies from around Southeast Europe, in town for the Consular Leadership Day, also attended the event. (AJohnson)

15. (U) FOURTH ANNUAL REGIONAL CONSULAR LEADERSHIP DAY: Embassy Zagreb's hosted the Fourth Annual Regional Consular Leadership Day at the U.S. Embassy on February 8, focusing on three Consular Leadership Tenets: "Build Great Teams, Communicate, and Learn Constantly." Forty-six consular officers and locally employed staff members from Zagreb, Sarajevo, Skopje, Belgrade, Pristina and Podgorica participated in the day-long event, which included presentations from Maria Belvedere, Officer in Charge, Regional DHS Office of U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, and Martina Delija, Regional Federal Benefits Assistant. In addition, two staff members from Sarajevo gave an overview of their response to the 2007 bus accident involving a group of American tourists. Attendees also participated in round table discussions on best practices in their respective units

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(NIV, IV, ACS and Fraud Prevention). (MNice)

16. (U) U.S. EMBASSY OFFICERS LEARN OF ECONOMIC SUCCESS STORIES NEW AND OLD: As part of Embassy Zagreb's Entry Level Officer Development Program, six ELOs visited Applied Ceramics in Sisak and Gavrilovic in Petrinja, two towns about fifty miles outside Zagreb. At Applied Ceramics they met with the company's president, Croatian-American Matt Sertic, to learn about his experience establishing a branch of the company in Croatia last year. Sertic said he encourages other companies from Silicon Valley to consider investing in Croatia, but he added that cumbersome administrative and bureaucratic processes remain an obstacle, particularly for those without a Croatian background. At Gavrilovic, the officers learned about the changes the company has undergone as one of the oldest meat-processing companies in Europe, including socialization during the Yugoslav era, confiscation by Serbs during the Homeland War, and reestablishing the company after the war, partially with USG financial support for demining to promote economic development. Currently the company is working to expand its product sales on the U.S. market. (SLitke)
WALKER